



# **Investigating DHCR24 as a protector against cellular stress: More than just a cholesterol-synthesising enzyme**

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**Certificate of Original Authorship**

This thesis is the result of a research candidature conducted jointly with another University as part of a collaborative Doctoral degree. I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as part of the collaborative doctoral degree and/or fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Robert Kasz

Date:

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## Abstract

Atherosclerosis and insulin resistance are globally prevalent metabolic diseases, primarily driven by endothelial and hepatic inflammation, respectively. High density lipoprotein (HDL) reduces the inflammation in models of atherosclerosis and insulin sensitivity, and in doing so, improves these conditions. Our laboratory has demonstrated that in human coronary artery endothelial cells (HCAECs), HDL's suppression of the inflammatory response is a gene-regulated process and that 3 $\beta$ -hydroxysteroid- $\Delta$ 24 reductase (DHCR24) is one of the most upregulated genes by HDL.

DHCR24 is a cholesterol biosynthesis enzyme however, recent work in various cell types shows DHCR24 emerging as a potent multifaceted protein protecting against cellular stress. This study commenced with confirming apolipoprotein I (apoA-I) rHDL increases DHCR24 expression in HCAECs, while revealing for the first time that HDL also increases DHCR24 expression in human hepatoma 7 (HuH7) cells.

This study next questioned whether DHCR24 mimics apoA-I rHDL's suppression of the inflammatory response in these cell types. The data presented provides proof-of-principle that DHCR24 replicates HDL's suppression of tumour necrosis factor-alpha (TNF- $\alpha$ )-induced intracellular cell adhesion molecule 1 (ICAM-1) and vascular cell adhesion molecule 1 (VCAM-1) levels in HCAECs, and interleukin 8 (IL-8) levels in HuH7 cells.

Characterising DHCR24's role was explored to learn more about how DHCR24 suppresses a TNF- $\alpha$ -induced inflammatory response in HCAECs and HuH7 cells. This study showed that DHCR24's oxidoreductase region mediates DHCR24's suppression of a TNF- $\alpha$ -induced inflammatory response in these cell types. This effect occurred without DHCR24 increasing cholesterol levels, despite the oxidoreductase site's integral role in cholesterol biosynthesis. These are exciting results as they indicate that DHCR24 is more than just a cholesterol biosynthesis enzyme in HCAECs and HuH7 cells.

Elucidating the mechanisms by which DHCR24 suppresses a TNF- $\alpha$ -induced inflammatory response in HCAECs and HuH7 cells highlighted a cell type-specific nature of DHCR24's activity, which is in keeping with reports in the literature. In keeping with this cell type-specificity, a TNF- $\alpha$ -induced inflammatory response was suppressed, in part, by a decreased endoplasmic reticulum (ER) stress response in HCAECs. Interestingly, this did not occur in HuH7 cells. The work here suggests that this is attributed to the increased cholesterol content in HuH7 cells

compared to HCAECs. DHCR24's cell type-specific effects are reinforced by the cellular response of DHCR24 levels to TNF- $\alpha$ -activation – in HCAECs, DHCR24 levels were modestly increased; conversely in HuH7 cells, TNF- $\alpha$ -activation markedly decreased DHCR24 levels. Moreover, TNF- $\alpha$ -activation caused DHCR24's translocation from its ER-localisation to the cytoplasm and nucleus, while in HuH7 cells, DHCR24 remained localised peri-nuclearly.

This data provides novel mechanistic insight into DHCR24's multifunctional role in two different cell types, laying the foundation for potential DHCR24-based therapeutics, and provides impetus for further investigation of DHCR24.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>VIII</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>	<b>XI</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2 – GENERAL METHODS</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3 – DHCR24 REPLICATES APOA-I RHD L'S SUPPRESSION OF A TNF-A-INDUCED INFLAMMATORY RESPONSE IN HCAEC</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4 – CHARACTERISATION OF THE MECHANISMS MEDIATING DHCR24'S PROTECTIVE EFFECTS IN HCAEC</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5 – DHCR24 REPLICATES APOA-I RHD L'S SUPPRESSION OF A TNF-A-INDUCED INFLAMMATORY RESPONSE IN HUH7 CELLS</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6 – CHARACTERISATION OF THE MECHANISMS MEDIATING DHCR24'S PROTECTIVE EFFECTS IN HUH7 CELLS</b>	<b>191</b>
<b>CHAPTER 7 – SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND LIMITATIONS</b>	<b>220</b>
<b>CHAPTER 8 – REFERENCES</b>	<b>229</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 1.1	The global distribution of major causes of death	3
Figure 1.2	Unmodifiable cardiovascular disease risk factors	5
Figure 1.3	Unmodifiable insulin resistance risk factors	11
Figure 1.4	The canonical I $\kappa$ B kinase (IKK)/nuclear factor kappa B (NF $\kappa$ B) pathway	16
Figure 1.5	Early fatty streak/atherosclerotic plaque formation	20
Figure 1.6	Intermediate lesion development	22
Figure 1.7	Advanced atherosclerotic plaque	24
Figure 1.8	Apoptosis is activated via the unfolded protein response (UPR)	28
Figure 1.9	Persistent calcium release stimulates apoptotic pathways	31
Figure 1.10	DHCR24 levels were increased treated in HCAEC treated with apolipoprotein-I reconstituted high-density lipoprotein (apoA-I rHDL)	49
Figure 1.11	Chromosomal location of DHCR24 (1p32.3)	50
Figure 1.12	Cholesterol biosynthesis via the Bloch pathway and the Kandutsch-Russell pathway	52
Figure 1.13	The activities of DHCR24	56
Figure 2.1	Counting cells using the Neubauer haemocytometer	71
Figure 2.2	pcDNA 3.1A(-)/myc-His plasmid vector	72
Figure 2.3	pEGFP-N1 plasmid vector	73
Figure 2.4	pcDNA 3.1A(-)/myc-His plasmid vector	74
Figure 2.5	An Experion-generated virtual gel of a total RNA sample	96
Figure 3.1	Transient transfection of HCAEC with pcDNA3.1A-DHCR24 successfully increased DHCR24 levels	117
Figure 3.2	DHCR24-overexpression reduced monocyte to HCAEC adhesion in TNF- $\alpha$ -activated HCAECs	119
Figure 3.3	DHCR24-overexpression reduced monocyte to HCAEC adhesion in H <sub>2</sub> O <sub>2</sub> -activated HCAECs	120
Figure 3.4	DHCR24-overexpression suppressed TNF- $\alpha$ -activated ICAM-1 protein levels in HCAECs	122
Figure 3.5	DHCR24-overexpression suppressed TNF- $\alpha$ -activated VCAM-1 protein levels in HCAECs	123
Figure 3.6	DHCR24-overexpression suppressed TNF- $\alpha$ -activated VCAM-1 mRNA levels in HCAECs	124
Figure 4.1	DHCR24 overexpression does not increase HCAEC cholesterol content	138
Figure 4.2	Transient transfection of HCAECs with pDHCR24-N294T/K306N successfully increased DHCR24 levels	140
Figure 4.3	DHCR24 oxidoreductase mutant (pN294T/K306N) did not suppress TNF- $\alpha$ -activated ICAM-1 protein levels in HCAECs	142
Figure 4.4	DHCR24 oxidoreductase mutant (N294T/K306N) did not suppress TNF- $\alpha$ -activated VCAM-1 protein levels in TNF- $\alpha$ -activated HCAECs	143
Figure 4.5	DHCR24 oxidoreductase mutant (pN294T/K306N) did not suppress TNF- $\alpha$ -activated VCAM-1 mRNA levels in HCAECs	144
Figure 4.6	Localisation of DHCR24 protein in cultured non-transfected HCAECs by immunocytochemistry staining	148
Figure 4.7	DHCR24 localises to the endoplasmic reticulum (ER) in HCAECs	149



Figure 4.8	DHCR24 translocates from the ER to the cytoplasm and nucleus following TNF- $\alpha$ -activation in HCAECs	150
Figure 4.9	pcDNA3.1A-DHCR24 (pDHCR24)-overexpression suppressed sXBP-1 mRNA levels in TNF- $\alpha$ -activated HCAECs in comparison to pcDNA3.1A (pControl) and pDHCR24-N294T/K306N (pN294T/K306N)	152
Figure 4.10	pcDNA3.1A-DHCR24 (pDHCR24) and pDHCR24-N294T/K306N (pN294T/K306N) did not suppress XBP-1 mRNA levels in TNF- $\alpha$ -activated HCAECs	153
Figure 4.11	ATF-4 mRNA levels were not significantly increased in TNF- $\alpha$ -activated HCAECs	154
Figure 4.12	pDHCR24 suppressed ATF-6 mRNA levels in TNF- $\alpha$ -activated HCAECs	155
Figure 5.1	DHCR24 mRNA levels are increased in HuH7 cells following 16 hour apoA-I rHDL treatment	172
Figure 5.2	DHCR24 mRNA levels are decreased following transfection with siRNA against DHCR24	174
Figure 5.3	DHCR24 mRNA levels are decreased in TNF- $\alpha$ -activated HuH7 cells	176
Figure 5.4	The suppressive effect of apoA-I rHDL against cytokine cocktail/FFA treatment-induced IL-8 mRNA levels in HuH7 cells is lost when DHCR24 is knocked down	178– 179
Figure 5.5	The suppressive effect of apoA-I rHDL against TNF- $\alpha$ /FFA treatment-induced IL-8 mRNA levels in HuH7 cells is lost when DHCR24 is knocked down	180– 181
Figure 5.6	Transient transfection of HuH7 cells with pcDNA3.1A-DHCR24 successfully increased DHCR24 levels	183
Figure 5.7	DHCR24-overexpression suppressed TNF- $\alpha$ -activated IL-8 protein levels in HuH7 cells	185
Figure 5.8	DHCR24-overexpression reduced IL-8 mRNA levels in TNF- $\alpha$ -activated HuH7 cells	186
Figure 6.1	DHCR24 overexpression does not increase HuH7 cell cellular cholesterol content	200
Figure 6.2	Transient transfection of HuH7 cells with pDHCR24-N294T/K306N successfully increased DHCR24 levels	202
Figure 6.3	DHCR24 oxidoreductase mutant (N294T/K306N) did not suppress TNF- $\alpha$ -activated IL-8 protein levels in TNF- $\alpha$ -activated HuH7 cells	204
Figure 6.4	DHCR24 oxidoreductase mutant (pN294T/K306N) did not suppress TNF- $\alpha$ -activated IL-8 mRNA levels in HuH7 cells	205
Figure 6.5	Localisation of DHCR24 protein in cultured non-transfected HuH7 cells by immunocytochemistry staining	208
Figure 6.6	Apoptosis levels are significantly decreased by wild type DHCR24 but not the DHCR24 oxidoreductase mutant (N294T/K306N) in TNF- $\alpha$ -activated HuH7 cells	210
Figure 6.7	sXBP-1 mRNA levels were not increased in TNF- $\alpha$ -activated HuH7 cells	212
Figure 6.8	XBP-1 mRNA levels were not increased in TNF- $\alpha$ -activated HuH7 cells	213
Figure 6.9	ATF-4 mRNA levels were not increased in TNF- $\alpha$ -activated HuH7 cells	214
Figure 6.10	ATF-6 mRNA levels were not increased in TNF- $\alpha$ -activated HuH7 cells	215

## List of Tables

Table 1.1	Modifiable cardiovascular disease risk factors	4
Table 1.2	Australian diagnostic criteria for diabetes	8
Table 1.3	Modifiable insulin resistance risk factors	9-10
Table 1.4	Organ-specific complications associated with hyperglycaemia	13–14
Table 1.5	Arterial endothelium functions	19
Table 1.6	Statin classes and origins	36
Table 2.1	List of reagents	65–69
Table 2.2	Transfection with pDHCR24 using TransPass HUVEC Transfection Reagent	77
Table 2.3	siDHCR24 in HuH7 cells using HiPerfect Transfection Reagent	78
Table 2.4	FFA diluents	79
Table 2.5	Cytokine dilutions	80
Table 2.6	Primary and secondary antibody dilutions used for Western blotting	93
Table 2.7	Reagents and volumes used for the iScript cDNA Synthesis Kit	97
Table 2.8	Primer sequences	98
Table 2.9	iQ SYBR Green Supermix reagents for Real-Time PCR	99
Table 3.1	Primer sequences	115
Table 4.1	Primer sequences	134
Table 5.1	siDHCR24 in HuH7 cells using HiPerfect Transfection Reagent	167
Table 5.2	Primer sequences	169
Table 6.1	Primer sequences	197

## List of Abbreviations

3'	Three prime
5'	Five prime
18S	18S ribosomal <i>RNA</i>
28S	28S ribosomal <i>RNA</i>
w/v	Weight per volume
A $\beta$	Amyloid beta
ABCA1	ATP binding cassette transporter A1
ABCG1	ATP binding cassette transporter G1
ABS	Australian bureau of statistics
ABTS	2,2'-Azinobis [3-ethylbenzothiazoline-6-sulfonic acid]-diammonium salt
ACC1	Acetyl-CoA carboxylase 1
ACC2	Acetyl-CoA carboxylase 2
ACTH	Adrenocorticotrophic hormone
AIHS	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ANOVA	Analysis of variance
ApoA-I	Apolipoprotein I
ApoE	Apolipoprotein E
ApoE <sup>-/-</sup>	Apolipoprotein E homozygous knockout
ATF-4	Activating transcription factor-4
ATF-4(n)	Active nuclear form of ATF-4
ATF-6	Activating transcription factor-6
ATP	Adenosine triphosphate
ASK1	Apoptosis signal-regulating kinase 1
$\beta$ 2M	Beta-2 Microglobulin
BCA	Bicinchoninic acid assay
bFGF	Basic fibroblast growth factor
BSA	Bovine serum albumin
C-terminal	Carboxyl-terminal
CAM	Cell adhesion molecule
CCL2	Chemokine ligand 2
CCL5	Chemokine ligand 5
CD40L	cluster of differentiation 40L
cDNA	Complementary deoxyribonucleic acid
CETP	cholesteryl ester transfer protein
CHOP	CCAAT enhancer binding protein homologous protein
Chop <sup>-/-</sup>	Chop homozygous knockout
CO <sub>2</sub>	Carbon dioxide
CRP	C-reactive protein
COX	Cyclooxygenase
COX1	Cyclooxygenase 1
COX 2	Cyclooxygenase 2
CX <sub>3</sub> CR1	CX3C chemokine receptor 1
DAB	3,3'-diaminobenzidine
DAPI	4',6-diamidino-2-phenylindole
DHCR24	3 $\beta$ -hydroxysteroid- $\Delta$ 24 reductase
DMEM	Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Medium

DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
<i>E.coli</i>	<i>Escherichia coli</i>
EDTA	Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid
EGFP	Enhanced green fluorescent protein
ELISA	Enzyme linked immunosorbent assay
EIF2 $\alpha$	Eukaryotic initiation factor 2 alpha
eNOS	Endothelial NO synthase
ER	Endoplasmic reticulum
ERO1 $\alpha$	ER oxidase 1 alpha
FAD	Flavin adenine dinucleotide
FBS	Fetal bovine serum
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FFA	Free Fatty Acid
FBG	Fasting blood glucose
FITC	Fluorescein-Isothiocyanate
FPLC	Fast protein liquid chromatography
GAPDH	Glyceraldehyde-3-phosphate dehydrogenase
GIT	Gastrointestinal tract
GM-CSF	Granulocyte-macrophage colony stimulating factors
GRP78	Glucose-regulated protein 78
H&E	Haematoxylin and eosin
H <sub>2</sub> O	Water
H <sub>2</sub> O <sub>2</sub>	Hydrogen peroxide
HbA1c	Glycated haemoglobin
HBSS	Hank's buffered salts solution
HCAECs	Human coronary artery endothelial cells
HCV	Hepatitis C virus
HDL	High-density lipoprotein
HFD	High fat diet
HO-1	Heme oxygenase-1
HRP	Horseradish peroxidase
HS	Human serum
hs-CRP	High sensitivity C-reactive protein
HuH7	Human hepatoma 7
HUVEC	Human umbilical vein endothelial cells
ICAM-1	Intracellular cell adhesion molecule 1
IFN- $\gamma$	Interferon-gamma
IGF-1	Insulin-like growth factor-1
IKK	I $\kappa$ B kinase
IL-1	Interleukin-1
IL-1 $\beta$	interleukin 1-beta
IL-6	Interleukin-6
IL-8	Interleukin-8
ILLUMINATE	Investigation of Lipid Level Management to Understand Its Impact in Atherosclerotic Events
IRE1	Inositol 1,2,5-triphosphate-activated receptor
JNK	c-Jun amino-terminal kinase
KBr	Potassium bromide
LB	Luria broth
LDL	Low-density lipoprotein

Ldlr <sup>-/-</sup>	LDL receptor homozygous knockout
M-CSF	Monocyte colony stimulating factor
MAPK	Mitogen-activated protein kinase
MCP-1	Monocyte chemoattractant protein-1
MEF	Mouse embryonic fibroblast
MHC	Major histocompatibility complex
MMP	Metalloproteinase
N-terminal	Amino-terminal
NaCl	Sodium chloride
NADPH	Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate
NCBI	National Center for Biotechnology Information
NCD	Non-communicable disease
NFκB	Nuclear factor kappa B
NO	Nitric oxide
NPG	<i>n</i> -propyl gallate
OD	Optical density
OGTT	Oral glucose tolerance test
oxLDL	Oxidised low density lipoprotein
p38 MAPK	p38 mitogen-activated protein kinase
p53	Tumour suppressor p53/Protein 53/Tumour protein 53
PAGE	Polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis
PBS	Phosphate buffered saline
PC12	Pheochromocytoma
PCR	Polymerase chain reaction
PDGF	Platelet-derived growth factor
PERK	Protein kinase-like endoplasmic reticulum kinase
PI3K	Phosphatidylinositol 3-Kinase
PLPC	1-palmitoyl-2-linoleoyl- <i>sn</i> -glycero-3-phosphatidylcholine
PVDF	Polyvinylidene fluoride
qPCR	Real-time PCR
RCT	Reverse cholesterol transport
rHDL	Reconstituted high-density lipoproteins
RIPA	Radioimmunoprecipitation assay buffer
RNA	Ribonucleic Acid
ROS	Reactive oxygen species
RPM	Revolutions per minute
RPMI	Roswell Park Memorial Institute
RT-qPCR	Reverse transcription real time PCR
S1P	Site-1 protease
SAA	Serum amyloid A1
SAPK	Stress activated protein kinase
SDS	Sodium dodecyl sulfate
SEM	Standard error of the mean
SH-SY5Y	Neuroblastoma cell line
siRNA	Small interfering ribonucleic acid
SMC	Smooth muscle cell
SR-B1	Scavenger receptor class B type 1
STAT1	Signal transducer and activator of transcription-1
sXBP-1	Spliced X-box binding protein-1
TBS	Tris buffered saline

TGF- $\beta$	Transforming growth factor-beta
TNF- $\alpha$	Tumour necrosis factor-alpha
TRAF2	Tumour necrosis factor receptor-associated factor 2
UPR	Unfolded Protein Response
UV	Ultraviolet
VCAM-1	Vascular cell adhesion molecule-1
WHO	World Health Organisation
XBP-1	X-box binding protein-1